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## EDITORIAL

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Speaking for the General Education Board, Abraham Flexner declares that formal grammar should be dropped from the school course. As a matter of fact it was dropped from many school courses years ago. Mr. Flexner is tardy in suggesting that particular remedy. We are now actually witnessing the return of a chastened and transformed grammar to take its proper place as the handmaid of oral and written composition and so, indirectly, of reading.

The grammar that Mr. Flexner inveighs against is the grammar of classification, of mere general knowledge—or near-knowledge. It consists of formal statements of facts and principles which children memorize and juggle with, handling abstractions with no real sense of their significance. Such grammar enables pupils to “pick out” the parts of speech, classify adverbs, and parse verbs. Opposed to it is the new type of grammar described by Mr. Cross in the *English Journal* for December, 1915. This teaches children what words and groups of words do, and the possibilities of arrangement to help them to do it better. Such facts as are without these practical values modern school grammar cheerfully ignores, and thus is enabled to concentrate four times as much attention upon the essentials—upon knowing whether a group of words is or is not a sentence, for example. In short, the new grammar is composition-grammar, not “preparation-for-Latin” or “general-information” grammar.

The great obstacle in the way of the new grammar is tradition, embodied in teachers, courses of study, textbooks, and examinations. With reference to the latter, it is the general custom for state departments of education to prepare and to circulate uniform examinations for teachers and even for pupils. Unfortunately the examiners who perform this work seem, in far too many instances, not to have heard of the new type of grammar, which deals with functions rather than names; and hence they still ask

for examples of kinds of this and kinds of that. As a result, those textbooks flourish which are strong in pigeonholes, and the triumph of a really useful type of grammar is delayed. The *English Journal* ventures to propose a concerted attempt on the part of the English associations of the United States to persuade school authorities, both state and local, to adopt a more vital type of examination in English grammar. In doing so they can doubtless count upon the active co-operation of the newly organized committee of the National Council of Teachers of English on Economy of Time in English Teaching.

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The Executive Committee of the National Council of Teachers of English has made substantial progress in arranging the details of the program for the annual meeting, which will be held in New York City, November 30 and December 1 and 2. The chairmen of the sections are announced as follows: College, Professor F. N. Scott; High School, Principal Oscar C. Gallegher; Elementary, Superintendent George A. Mirick; Normal School, Mr. Willis H. Wilcox; Public Speaking, Mr. Guy M. Watkins; Library, Miss Mary E. Hall. These persons may be counted upon to provide strong programs. The headquarters and meeting-places of the Council and of the sections will be at the Hotel Astor. Inasmuch as the city will be crowded at Thanksgiving with football enthusiasts, members of the Council should make hotel reservations months in advance. Inquiries as to rates may be addressed to the Secretary.